

South Shore ready to play new game – one focused on recreation, collaboration

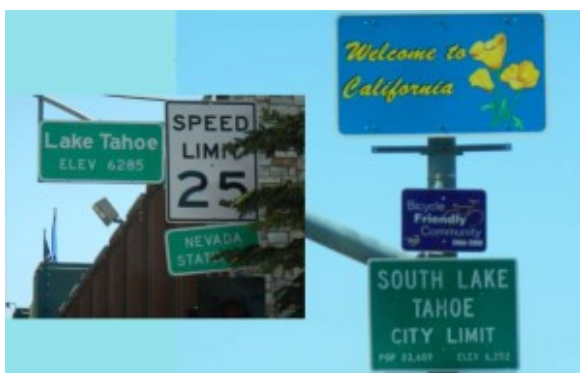
By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Want to bring a sporting event to the South Shore? Then plan to make multiple calls to South Lake Tahoe, Douglas County, El Dorado County and Lake Tahoe Unified School District. And that's just for starters.

A permit from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency is needed for many things. If it were a water event, other entities would likely be involved.

Need roads to be closed? There's Caltrans, NDOT, city and county departments of transportation, plus CHP, NHP, city cops and county sheriff's departments.

And if you want a sign put up somewhere to advertise the event, more paperwork and not just one entity in most cases to get that done.



Signs at the state line welcome people to Nevada and California, respectively, but officials would like to focus on this being one

community, one economy.

Photo/LTN

There is no one place to go to make it easy for locals or outsiders to attract athletic events to the region. But that is likely to change.

Through the recreation master plan that is being developed by the city and El Dorado County, a one-stop center could be a reality. It might even involve having a true visitors center in the area that would be operated by staff who is supported by various jurisdictions. Now that Douglas County is at the table and wants to be a player, it could make the rec plan a truly cohesive enterprise.

Recreation will be one of the main topics of discussion at the April 29 joint South Lake Tahoe City Council-Douglas County Commission meeting.

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry and Douglas County Manager Steve Mokrohisky spoke with *Lake Tahoe News* at length Friday about how far the two jurisdictions have come since the inaugural joint meeting in November 2011. They also delved into the particulars about Monday's agenda.

While Mokrohisky said the county's recreation facilities exceed the basic standards, he added, "But we need better coordination with the city. We don't do a good job of coordinating events. We need more event planning."

When the consultant who is hired to do the rec plan comes for a visit, the team will spend multiple days on the South Shore experiencing the facilities. A rep from the firm will be at the April 29 meeting.

"I think the debate is long over. We are a tourist economy. Recreation is our economy," Kerry said. "If we don't invest, we don't have anything to compete with."

Mokrohisky described the South Shore as once being gaming dominant, with recreation as an amenity, now recreation is the dominant economic driver and gaming is an amenity.

Besides recreation, the area plans each body is creating for their respective sections of the state line will be discussed. Both are proceeding, with the electeds likely to vote on the respective plans later this spring or early summer before the TRPA Governing Board hears them later in the summer.

In some ways, this is an extension of the first joint meeting where much of the talk was about the South Shore Vision Plan. City and county staffs have been coordinating so design elements are similar and each knows what the other is working on.

This is one more way the state line is being blurred – by creating a visual connection between the areas.

Collaboration was the one word that was repeated most often by Kerry and Mokrohisky. While they, staff and local electeds are on the same page when it comes to wanting to focus on recreation and one economy, those in Sacramento and Carson City don't see it that way.

The three bills floating around the two legislatures that could bring the dissolution of TRPA are on Monday's agenda.

"It's like an Old West standoff between the two states," Mokrohisky said. "Our goal is to bring civility to the discussion. It is absolutely high stakes."

It doesn't mean everyone sees eye-to-eye on every detail, but locally compromise was found by being able to adopt the TRPA Regional Plan in December. No one got everything they wanted, but the outcome was something everyone but the Sierra Club, which has sued to stop the implementation of the plan, says they can live with.

Kerry and Mokrohisky say it is imperative locals move forward no matter what is going on around them.

“We plan in a state of ambiguity all the time,” Kerry said.

Mokrohisky added, “We are not going to cower in fear of the threat of a lawsuit.”

In the desire to work more closely, it’s possible the governments will share services. Douglas does this with its neighbors in Nevada. The city is looking at cooperative agreements with El Dorado County.

“You start by forming relationships, seeing what you have in common and who does what well,” Mokrohisky said.

Kerry added, “The movement is toward sharing resources instead of siloing.”

No action is expected by the electeds on Monday, though direction to staff of some sort is possible. Future joint meetings are likely.

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Note:

The South Lake Tahoe City Council-Douglas County Commission meeting is open to the public. It is April 29 at 1pm at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel – the old Embassy Suites.